



Promise

Who am I? Am I the murderer or am I the one who wept? Am I the youth of the President broken, without hope, or the magnificence of the wife who ennobled grief with hope? Am I the sickness which laughed with Oswald, or the justice denied to him? Am I both?

I am not.

I do not know the threshold between the healthy and the sick, the growing and the decaying; but I know the sick and the decaying. I have met them.

The well who immunize themselves by distance; the comfortable who recline, looking upwards, seeing no woe; the capable without compassion. I shivered.

I have talked to you all, you sound hollow; I have shaken your hands, your smiles haunt. You, the well, the comfortable, the capable—not those beyond reach without vision—you have murdered. You will again.

I cannot undo the murder. But I can point the finger at you who may do violence bit by bit tomorrow.

This I promise.

Charles L. Klotzer

CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS ISSUE: Hubert H. Humphrey, U. S. Senator; Mike Mansfield, U. S. Senator; Harry Mark Petrakis, author; Mark M. Perlberg, senior editor "World Book Year Book;" S. K. Oberbeck, St. Louis Post-Dispatch; Martin E. Marty, associate professor, University of Chicago Divinity School, and associate editor, "The Christian Century;" Robert Farnsworth, assistant professor of American Literature, University of Kansas City.
PHOTOS: Cover, by UPI; Pages 3, 5, 15, and 16 by Wide World Photos, Inc.

FOCUS/Midwest, POB 3086 St. Louis.

PUBLISHER and EDITOR/Charles L. Klotzer
LITERARY EDITOR/Webster Schott

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Harry Barnard, Tilghman R. Cloud, Irving Dilliard, Bernard Eisman, Robert G. Hoyt, Abner J. Mikva, William Robert Ming, Jr., Dan Saults, Paul Simon.

ART DIRECTOR Peter Geist
DESIGNER Chip Reay

FOCUS/Midwest, October, 1963, Vol. 2, No. 9. Second class postage paid at St. Louis, Mo. Published monthly by FOCUS/Midwest Publishing Co., except for one combination issue for March and April. Subscription rates: \$6 one year, \$11 two years, \$15 three years, \$25 five years, \$100 lifetime. Foreign \$1.50 per year extra. Allow one month for address changes. Advertising rates upon request. Enclose stamped, self-addressed envelope with manuscript. Copyright© 1963, by the FOCUS Midwest Publishing Company, Inc.



Mrs. Kennedy's grace and dignity of composure commanded the admiration of everyone in this land. She was a gallant figure, erect and unfaltering in her steps to a private Calvary. Hers was a fortitude so unflinching that it provided a measure of the great force of character which sustained her. Here was a First Lady who was indeed entitled to that rank among womankind.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

He Gave Himself

*Hubert H. Humphrey
United States Senator*

SEVERAL hours before the funeral of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, while his body rested in the rotunda of the Capitol, a policeman at the entrance asked a young man where he was going.

The man answered: "I have come to pay my respects to President Kennedy. Then I will go to my church. Then I want to go home — to be with my family. And tomorrow, I will go back to work again."

His answer seemed to sum up the feelings and thoughts of most of us. We sought to express in some way our respect for John Kennedy and our sorrow because of his death. We sought understanding and comfort with our God. We sought to be with our loved ones. Then we returned to our daily lives and to work, as President Kennedy would have wanted.

We are back at work now, as individuals and as a nation. But we are not the same as we were before that incredible and ghastly day of Friday, November 22. Something is gone from Washington, from this nation, from this world.

It is difficult to describe my own thoughts, even now. Words seem like cold pebbles, thrown into a sea of emotion. But I must seek to comprehend and to communicate my understanding of the meaning of John Fitzgerald Kennedy's life and death.

He gave himself to his country, in life and death, in war and peace.

His service to the people of the United

States was total and unqualified. As President, he gave all of his courage, his intelligence, his energy, and his strength to the tasks of this nation. His life was a constant Profile of Courage.

The result was an America more firmly on the path to peace, an America more completely dedicated to the cause of freedom, an America more determined to secure equality for all of its citizens.

In death, President Kennedy continued to give to this country.

Out of the shock of his assassination and the deep sorrow of his death, the people of this nation have emerged with new courage, new strength, and new unity.

Never before have the American people been so moved. Never before has there been such a total sense of involvement by all of the people. Never before have so many Americans joined together so immediately to express respect for a man and his work.

We are, truly, "... one Nation, under God, indivisible ..."

To President Lyndon B. Johnson, we offer our prayers, our faith, and our confidence. He gives us his courage, his skill, and his leadership.

To Mrs. John F. Kennedy and all of the members of the late President's family, we offer our prayers and our hearts. They gave us an unforgettable demonstration of courage, grace, and dignity. That was exactly what we needed in a time which was otherwise tragic and terrible.

Eulogy

Mike Mansfield

Majority Leader of the United States Senate



THERE was a sound of laughter; in a moment, it was no more. And so she took a ring from her finger and placed it in his hands.

There was a wit in a man neither young nor old; but a wit full of an old man's wisdom and of a child's wisdom, and, then, in a moment it was no more. And so she took a ring from her finger and placed it in his hands.

There was a man marked with the scars of his love of country, a body active with the surge of a life far, far from spent and, in a moment, it was no more. And so she took a ring from her finger and placed it in his hands.

There was a father with a little boy, a little girl, and a joy of each in the other. In a moment it was no more, and so she took a ring from her finger and placed it in his hands.

There was a husband who asked much and gave much, and, out of the giving and the asking, wove with a woman what could not

be broken in life, and, in a moment it was no more. And so she took a ring from her finger and placed it in his hands, and kissed him and closed the lid of a coffin.

A piece of each of us died at that moment. Yet, in death he gave of himself to us. He gave us of a good heart from which the laughter came. He gave us of a profound wit, from which a great leadership emerged. He gave us of a kindness and a strength fused into a human courage to seek peace without fear.

He gave us of his love that we, too, in turn, might give. He gave that we might give of ourselves, that we might give to one another until there would be no room, no room at all, for the bigotry, the hatred, prejudice and the arrogance which converged in that moment of horror to strike him down.

In leaving us — these gifts, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, President of the United States, leaves with us. Will we take them, Mr. President? Will we have the sense and the responsibility and the courage to take them?

*In Brueghel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.*

FROM MUSEE DES BEAUX ARTS
W. H. AUDEN

*Defenceless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleagured by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.*

FROM "SEPTEMBER 1, 1963"
W. H. AUDEN

The Price of Knowledge

Webster Schott

Reprinted by Permission Random House, Inc.
From "September 1, 1939" and "Musee Des Beaux Arts"
Copyright 1940 by W. H. Auden
From "The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden"

Ivan Karamazov's "Everything is permitted" is the only expression there is of a coherent liberty. And we must follow out all the consequences of his remark.

ALBERT CAMUS . . . AUGUST, 1938

THERE is no good thing to recover from the murder of John F. Kennedy.

To find some fragment of consolation in the fact it was not committed by a white man who hated black men, a black man who hated white men, an agent of a foreign power, or the militia of the American right is but to admit the gravity of our situation.

There is only one return from the President's death, unspeakable awareness of our human condition, and the price of knowledge has come too high. We had it anyway. Our writers at the spearpoint of art have been passing the intelligence on to us for centuries. The nerve endings of our culture have been communicating it to us moaning and evening in word and picture.

Our condition is to operate in a reality that is surreal. Reality is beyond belief. It exceeds imagination. Consider the whole or the details: the brilliant, vital leader in a

moment of personal triumph murdered by a floundering psychopath with a mail-order rifle; the crazy victory over the laws of chance against rifle-fire striking a moving target at 100 yards; Nellie Connally's words a few seconds before the bullets, "You can't say that Dallas doesn't love you today, Mr. President;" the young man's red blood streaming over the beautiful woman in the pink suit, her roses dropped to the floor of the car; the second point-blank murder, before cameras and in a swarm of police, of the assassin by the operator of a couple of strip-tease joints; the real-fake names, Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby. The truth is more fantastic than fiction; we would refuse to believe this as a story.

But the unbelievable is real, and this is the kind of unreality in which sensibility and imagination must operate. Now we can see, if we will, the demanding logic of the distortionist and hallucinatory art of such American writers as John Hawkes and James Purdy, the Europeans Samuel Beckett and Jean Genet. The artist who would describe imaginatively our condition, searching for new symbols and new archetypes for our age, cannot compete with "reality." He must create a

"Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country."

These memorable words of the Nation's fourth martyred President come to mind as a sorrowing people try to accept the incredible fact that their elected leader has been snatched from life by an assassin's bullet.

John F. Kennedy did indeed pay the full price. He gave all there was to give for his country. He did it that others might enjoy freedom. And those others include us all.

What may we do, each in his way, each in his own station? One thing we can do is stand far more strongly than we have for the liberties that are ours under the Constitution's Bill of Rights. For if each of us would stand up for our historic freedoms, the total impact for liberty would be far greater than the achievement of any one man, including the late President Kennedy.

IRVING DILLIARD

We must stop the flow of the poison that when men differ, say, about taxes or civil rights or Russia, they cannot be reconciled by persuasion and debate, and that those who take the other view are implacable enemies. In the light of this monstrous crime, we can see that in a free country, which we are and intend to be, unrestrained speech and thought are inherently subversive.

WALTER LIPPMANN

higher order of unreality at another level than the fact world. Several years ago the novelist Philip Roth confessed that "the American writer in the middle of the 20th century has his hands full in trying to understand, and then describe, and then make *credible* much of the American reality. It stupefies, it sickens, it infuriates, and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one's own meager imagination." Now do we understand? At last, in the murder of John Kennedy, can everyone understand? Is absurdity, as Albert Camus said, not king?

And who is the maniac responsible for this crime? We are — all of us. It is we who require the political figure to expose himself to assassination: we must see him, touch him, surround him if he aspires to lead us. It is we who create psychopaths and criminals with the tensions and confusion of purpose, the emotional anguish running through our society. It is we who sell guns to potential murderers and in our abundance sustain the psychopathic personality who in more "primitive" societies could not survive.

Individuals compose society, and to deny that we are collectively responsible for the behavior of human society is to deny civiliza-

tion. But our society is incomplete. It got out of hand before we could complete it. Everything became possible — the horror of genocide, the wonder of the atom, the ecstasy of space — before we were ready.

We are responsible together but as individuals powerless to exercise the responsibility with decisiveness. To say that one can write his Congressman in support of legislation to halt the sale of arms by mail sounds, in the wake of tragedy, like blasphemy or a tasteless joke. To organize for peace or social order may make an end of the beginning, or it may polarize the sinister.

This is our condition. One stands helpless before events that hours earlier were beyond imagination. No personal act can express our unutterable outrage or prevent crimes of such magnitude and shock in the future. The tears fill our eyes before the television receiver. We weep for the man, his wife, his children, and for a world we cannot unmake and whose destiny is all things unimaginable.

Goethe once said there is no knowledge without suffering. As John Kennedy was buried his countrymen went to church to atone for what they had learned, and to plead for protection against it.

*All generous hearts lament the leader killed,
The young chief with the smile, the radiant face,
The winning way that turned a wondrous race
Into sublimer pathways, leading on.*

*Grant to us life that tho the man be gone
The promise of his spirit be fulfilled.*

JOHN MASEFIELD,
POET LAUREATE OF ENGLAND

*I realize the utter futility of words at such a time, but the
world of civilization shares the poignancy of this monumental
tragedy. As a former comrade in arms, his death kills some-
thing within me.*

GENERAL DOUGLAS A. MACARTHUR

We Shall Be Found

Harry Mark Petrakis

THERE will be many eulogies about him. Even his enemies — and they were myriad and vehement — will pay some shred of homage at his bier. In the end perhaps no eulogy will really suffice to define the elusive phenomenon of this young Boston Irishman who blazed so briefly and so remarkably over the dark and shadowed arena of American politics.

In thinking about him during these last tragic days I am strongly reminded of the late great writer, Thomas Wolfe, who died in 1936. There was a union of vision between them although on the surface they could not have appeared more different. One a slim poised young millionaire and the other a huge, volatile, often clumsy son of a North Carolina stonecarver.

But both sought in ways beyond the normal dimensions of daily experience to render fruitful and alive the American promise, to capture and retain the great boundless vision and hugeness of the country and its people. Both came to identify the legend of their hunger as an American legend and seek their image in the destiny of the nation. Both had a sense of a unique origin and a unique destiny, somehow inspired by the tradition of the pioneers, by the ideals so often submerged beneath the callous mediocrities of contemporary life.

"Out of the billion forms of America," Wolfe wrote, "out of the savage violence and the dense complexity of all its swarming life; from the unique and single substance of this land and this life of ours, must we draw the power and energy of our own life, the articulation of our speech, the substance of our art."

There was a fundamental innocence about both these men, a furious optimism in the face of provincial superstition, vindictive envy, and blind hatred. Both had a zestful love of life and its challenges. Both were basically fighters, undiscouraged by grim portents and assurances of disaster.

Who cannot recall the energetic young upstart at the Democratic convention in 1956 who came so close to beating the able veteran Kefauver for the vice-presidential nomination? Even here the tenets of destiny were at work. If Kennedy had won it was almost certain he would have gone down to defeat with the Stevenson ticket and perhaps this defeat would have prevented his later successful bid for the presidential nomination. He began running early and hard while the professional seers sneered and glibly catalogued the reasons he could not possibly win. But through the primaries of Wisconsin and West Virginia, the countless confrontations, the predatory fingers of petty politicians, he swept with a luminous vitality. "My name

*. . . this Good, this Decent,
this Kindly man . . .*

—Senator Mansfield

*I hear things crying in the world.
A nightmare congress of obscure
Delirium uttering overbreath
The tilt and jangle of this death.*

*Who had a sense of world and man,
Who had an apt and antic grace
Lies lenient, lapsed and large beneath
The tilt and jangle of this death.*

*The world goes on with what it has.
Its reasoned, right and only code.
Coaxing, with military faith,
The tilt and jangle of this death.*

GWENDOLYN BROOKS

(Reprinted with permission of the *Chicago Sun-Times*)

is Kennedy and I have come to ask for your support."

And as Wolfe cried out in his anguish, "I believe that we are lost here in America, but I believe we shall be found," so Kennedy would say in hundreds of towns and cities that the great promise of America was stagnant, that the country must move again in the direction of its greatness.

By the time of the Democratic convention in 1960, an aura of magic surrounded him. He was the young and handsome knight of the Grail with a string of incredible victories behind him. Through the screams, the shrieks, the banners and the smoke, through the total thunder of the frenzy which nominates our presidents, this strange sense of destiny swirled about his fair head.

He won the nomination and shaved victory in the election. And millions marveled that so little might have changed the outcome, that less force and battle anywhere along the line might so easily have resulted in his defeat. His hour of greatest triumph came perhaps on the day of his inauguration when he stood unrestrained in his delight waving to the marchers sweeping by, while a weary and shadowed Eisenhower sat huddled in the collar of his coat.

In his first thousand days he suffered defeats and victories. He learned the realities of political life for the man in the White House. But the marvelous thing evident to

any who could look at him without bias was the dimension of his growth, his maturing, a sterner resolve to fulfill his destiny. It was revealed on his face, in his eyes, in the way he spoke. As mediocre men were inspired in that office to outstanding performance, he, an outstanding man, served well to become a truly great president.

Now we will never know. His death reveals once more the awesome truth of the ancient epics, that man dares to ascend and the jealous gods smite down, even as Prometheus, who sought to carry fire to mankind was smitten. In the eyes of the man who struck him down, Kennedy's crime was of the same magnitude for he sought to shine a bright light upon the American myth and show us the disparity between the strident intolerance, and blatant bigotry, between the selfishness and the greed, and the true blazing promise of American life.

And Wolfe himself might have written the truest eulogy of the spirit and the vision which we lost on that terrible day in Dallas.

"And everywhere, through the immortal dark, moving in the night, and sometimes stirring in the hearts of men, and something crying in their wild unuttered blood, the wild unuttered tongues of its huge prophecies — so soon the morning, soon the morning: O America."

O America.

The Violence Within

Mark M. Perlberg

THE murder of our President — that brilliant and in so many ways irresistible figure, only a few hours ago — was an act so twisted in its intent and so terrible in its execution that it temporarily stopped thought. How could it have happened? The world's most powerful figure, at the head of a gay parade one moment, radiating health and confidence — a mangled corpse the next.

This murder so foul, this extinguishing of the life of the young President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, points to terrible sicknesses in our society, sicknesses that must be studied, treated, cured.

It points to the fact that violence is rampant in our nation. It makes a mockery of our professed respect for order, compromise, reason, the rule of law. And in the person of the supposed murderer, it shouts that our society, in its blank self-congratulatory heedlessness, produces a growing number of maimed, isolated individuals who live in moral and emotional darkness.

Can America ever be the same again. Let us hope not! Let us hope, instead, that all Americans look deep within themselves. Let us hope that we see how much and how often violence and terror live within our breasts. And the discovery once made, let us pray that we will shift the emphasis, the tempo, the quality of our lives. Let us hope that we will grow up at last, that we will find more enduring values to admire than the profit motive. Let us recall ideals such as service, and values such as patience, kindness, the pursuit of truth.

If we do so, we will walk in the footsteps of that shining man who lived these ideals and values, who knew with all his being that a society can remain free only so long as its citizens cast out hatred and cynicism in its national life, who believed in us more than we believed in him.

The Job of Grief

S. K. Oberbeck

WINTER crept up in a single night and surprised us. It came here suddenly one night and the next morning the trees in the park were oddly bare and clouds of clicking leaves blew in the wind across the brown grass of hills in the park near my house.

A few days later, John Kennedy was shot and killed.

When the news and confirmation came through at the newspaper where I work, the entire city room fell into a sudden, deadly silence and then, if rooms or men can be said to explode, the city room exploded.

It was comforting, I suppose, to have a job to do at the time. It was fortunate, I think, to be able to drop your head over your work and say nothing. It was a luxury to call for the copy-boy at the top of your lungs. It was a luxury to be quiet.

But we are moved to speak, of course. We are moved to find better words than the common cant of polite, printable condolence and eulogy. We are haunted by the sound of our own voices saying just about what has been said or what will be said tomorrow. We are moved to bring a more open grace to our talk about the late President, moved surely because he was a promising statesman of energy, a figure articulate with charm, humor, and intelligence. How difficult some find the job of grief.

When I felt people asking, by a look, if their grief could be considered up to the occasion, I resolved to say nothing. If I saw an expression that wondered whether its sorrow was apt, I thought it best to excuse myself to stand inside the bathroom door.

After seeing that small, surviving son salute his father's caisson so solemnly, after seeing Jack Ruby kill Oswald before millions of Americans, I thought the only thing to do was to take a long, cold walk in the park. I don't know if it did any good.

We have seen the grief of the American nation and profoundly sympathize with it.

IZVESTIA

The Two Cities: of Violence and Vision

Martin E. Marty

*Happy the men who die for the cities of earth,
For of these is made the City of God.*

—CHARLES PEGUY

Now there are two "days of infamy" whose memory unites all mature Americans. The first is December 7, 1941; the second, November 22, 1963. "Where were you when you first heard?" "What were you doing that day?" "What did you think when the news reached you?" These will be the typical questions by which memories of the awful days can be conjured anew in future conversations. Answers to the first two are not of general interest; they will be heard in the parlors. Answers to the third belong, however, in the forum. The first things most of us thought about on the day of the assassination should remain in our minds. These first intuitions may help us later to make sense of November 22, 1963 when that sense tends to become lost as we learn more detail.

"What did you think when the news reached you?" Citizens of the United States are so schooled in the detective story that we need not picture them exempting the story of a President's murder from their conventional responses. "I wondered who did it." The "I" who speaks will represent someone who was angered, bewildered, frustrated, and numbed. But he will have carried his immediate questioning further. Who did it? He was either sane or insane, whatever these words can mean in such a context. If in this context he was seen to be sane, one wondered that day: was he alone or part of a plot and a plan? In either case the question came at once to one word: "Why?"

The City of Violence: Since the assassinated was a national political leader, it was natural to assume that he was being murdered because of someone's insane grasp of national politics. From here on in the concerns of informed persons ranged with the direction of geometry and the compass: was the sniper who loosed from the anarchy of the political-religious Right or Left? That is not a question that would have been asked at just any old time at any old place. There have long

been rifles available and madmen to use them. But why here and now? It is the first question that cried for answer in U.S.A., Texas, 1963. Texas: where a Vice-Presidential candidate and his wife can be roughed up in a hotel lobby, a U.N. ambassador spitefully used and spat upon in a hall and in the streets; where a retired general spits fury at moderation and some oilmen pay for others' furies; where a National Indignation Convention finds its followers and where textbooks are nurtured and censored ("The Texas Schoolbook Repository?") — there, now, within a couple of days after the first bulletin of a shooting a President would be dead, his wife splattered with blood, a Governor seriously wounded, an assassin assassinated by a striptease queens' king. This is the Texas which occasioned the question: did it come from Right or Left?

Either answer, from the Right or from the Left, would imply an unfortunate context. If the shot came from the Right, one would fear for what the event would do to "us" who have tried to participate in politics' argument without violence. We who heard southern Christians last summer say of the death of a President's baby, "It served the Kennedy's right — for their racial stand" would hardly expect the mere death of a president to cause repentance. But how would *we* act, how would we repent and be renewed, if we knew such hatred took the form of bullets from "the bad guys?" If the shot came from the Left, what would it mean? The telegrams from Robert Welch and Madame Nhu provided immediate answer: the shot proved that "we" of the Right *were* right, that Communism is potent and desperate. But had that ever been denied? Had not the Radical Rights' suspicion been cast on the "soft" policies Mr. Kennedy was taking over against the Communist threat? Did not the death of Mr. Kennedy "from the Left" prove that the Right was wrong, that he *had* been the symbol and agent of free world resistance to Communism? Ah, but this geometry of Right and Left is all too analytical and logical. The violent undertone which blighted our bland suburban gentilities in recent years was never marked by logic.

What moved some misguided wretch to do this horrible deed may never be known to us, but we do know that such acts are commonly stimulated by forces of hatred and malevolence, such as today are eating their way into the bloodstream of American life.

What a price we pay for this fanaticism!

CHIEF JUSTICE EARL WARREN

The Two Cities:

Continued

The violence we have known under the surface of our system for more than a decade has been nurtured by the willful forgetting of history. Political agitators, some clergymen, all the specialists in tape-recording and film-stripping, all the chatterers and whisperers about "conspiracy" — these have shared an attempt to impoverish the spiritual resources of the West and of this nation. What would be remembered by them? Only one thin, particular strand of ideology which would go into the explanation of the particular agitator's self-interest. Forgotten would have been the riches America has inherited not only from its Fathers and its faiths, but also the deposit from Egypt and Greece and Rome and the East; the legacy of the Middle Ages and ancient Judaism and the Enlightenment. Too many of us have been wanting to forget these particulars, to leave behind the laborious recall of our treasurers, to pursue — what? Our personal daemons, that we might enthrone them.

The whole cast of characters: violent Texans, and the Lee Harvey Oswalds and Jack Rubys and Madame Nhys and their cheerleaders or apologists are characterized by one thing: *anomie*. They are marked by the normless, standardless, emotionless vacuum into which violence rushes. They are the bored and impatient who reject history in order to take history into their hands, to settle and solve things. ("Please send me one rifle, for which I enclose \$12.78." Or: "I did this because I have a deep sense of responsibility to Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy." Or: "I understand fully how you should feel before that ordeal which God has bestowed on you.")

In the moment after the news bulletin in a sense of futility which seized me as it seized others who want to remember history, to argue, to dispel violence, I was tempted to reach for a slogan I once snatched from a history student. It seemed to come as near to a philosophy of history as I could summon at the moment. Simply: "*The S.O.B.'s are gaining on us.*" That slogan reveals a pessimism congruent with life in a world where great and good men are killed. It is realistic:

it speaks of an "us" to represent those who survive and have not yet surrendered. It is good reportage: on November 22 "they" were "gaining." But its negation does not match the affirmations which we were to witness as the days passed: in the orderly transfer of government; in the absolutely impressive conduct of the President's survivors. Maybe those survivors and the assassinated President provide us a more positive philosophy of history, a better clue. As we watched television until we were tired of sight and sound, engrossed by the rituals of transfer and burial, there was time to begin to make sense of that clue.

The City of Vision: Can it not be that the Kennedy clan's devotion to its particular tradition may have lessons for our nation in general? On the day of the burial all those attributes of this family, so easily parodied by enemy and friend alike, were exempted from parody and elevated to virtue. Here was a family tradition obviously conscious of and trading on its tradition. The Kennedy clanishness now became mutual support; its ethnocentrism had been transformed into selfless national resource. Private faith became public witness. The members of the family's ability to argue and compete had been transmuted into a cooperation based on firmness; their pragmatic view of life served to balance our temptation to ideologize the idiocies of the day in Texas; their ability to relax in crisis was never more needed, never more apparent. It would be a pathetic fallacy to try to derive a philosophy of history from a numbed family on a day of a funeral. It would be a tragic fallacy to try to derive *no* element of such a philosophy from the experience.

The word I have been avoiding and skirting because its misuse would embarrass the late President's style is "spirituality." But it is precisely that word that keeps impressing itself on me, perhaps because I am hesitant to apply it to an unmystical man in a secular age. So much of the ceremony of November 25 was general, national, well-accepted; the Navy Hymn, the caisson, the eternal flame, Taps, corteges and catafalques and eulogies.

After dwelling upon the man who is no longer with us and after comforting those who still live in mourning and grief, our thoughts show us how much the capacity for hatred and evil yet remains in the world, how great the threat to civil order and peace still is and how great is the need for the grace of God, for His mercy and for His pardon.

POPE PAUL VI,

So much of it was, *but not all*. For there was present also a vision of life, an attitude to life and a ritual which are not the experience of the majority of Americans and is not necessarily a vivid or decisive one for the minority who should feel at home with it. Yet that day, it too was all of ours.

In only three years Mr. Kennedy had succeeded in making us forget what he was daily remembering: that he came of a once unwelcome *ethnos* and *ethos* and faith; that he had had to live out the most gigantic parable of acceptance in the last century on these shores. And in that space of three years he had succeeded in doing so so magnificently that we already had forgotten that it *had* been a gigantic parable and that much of the talk of 1960 about religion and Catholicism, about Fitzgerald-Kennedyism and Back Bay-Back Street politicking, about the Irish fervor, were not related to the actual "class" and style of life he was quietly introducing into the American main-stream.

A Jew could have done something like it, or a Latter Day Saint. Some day a woman will do it and — before the last day — a Negro. But it was left to Mr. Kennedy to make the first move. Until the day of his burial we almost forgot that he had made the move. That day, when we remembered we felt silly for ever having been mistrustful. Others will remember Mr. Kennedy for other contributions. But those of us who have both an historical and a contemporary interest in that spiritual element without which American life cannot be wholly explained will also remember him for the spirit of finesse with which he moved in this difficult religious course. Even his finesse infuriated some. Even that fury may have made its contribution to the understones of violence with which his successors in office must still cope.

But Mr. Kennedy did the only part he was asked to do: to prove that his particular tradition could enrich the general life of the nation without dissipating the former or distorting the latter. If he failed, I should like to see proof; if he succeeded, I should like to see celebration. And if this is *now* a nation which can sympathize with a Mrs. Tippet in Texas who grieves to the background of "The

Old Rugged Cross" and the drawl of a Baptist minister as well as with Mrs. Kennedy in Washington to the tone of "Ave Maria," and a Catholic Cardinal's drone, it can also be a nation which allows again for greater latitude and amplitude in politics. Mr. Kennedy, often the victim of attacks from two extremes, chose to go a purposeful, practical, and sometimes flamboyantly unmindful way. His political finesse, his "head of steam" were also related to a sense of history which must have drawn deeply from spiritual resources.

I have chosen to speak mainly of new violence and old tradition, of a darkness dropped in Texas and a ceremony of innocence in Washington. On a calmer day in a later season I shall join others who subject the whole Kennedy career to scrutiny. Not everything in the Cold War or the civil rights struggle looked good in his hands. As a matter of fact, it is now often said that in the caprices of the Cold War and the compromises of domestic politics, no President can *look* good. But a President can *be* good. Not until an assassin with his blank and pitiless gaze acted did we remember how good this one had been at times. We were told often after November 22 that when Kennedy expired, something went out of all of us. But something had also gone into us; the experience of seeing our traditions nourished by his and the experience of seeing our concern against mistrust and violence grow.

When the killing had to stop, the learning had to begin. Even during those absurd extensions of the original crime in Dallas the learning can now begin. All of us can keep our critical senses alert as we begin, again, the necessary argument of politics. From John Kennedy's political tradition in life and his religious tradition in death we can learn more ways to keep that argument within the bounds of civility. If the early 1960s have proven that "the worst are full of passionate intensity" they have not, we now know, proven that "the best lack all conviction." If that conviction was born, in part, by one man's view of the City of God, we profit as we examine its effect in the realm of the empirical: in his stamp on, his sacrifice for the city of man.

A national leader's greatest and hardest task is to hold his country together. The bitterness of faction, the spreading of slander, the fostering of personal hatred — all of these lead toward strife and violence that disrupt a nation. In President Kennedy's death we have lost a leader who understood the central significance of keeping America united, and who devoted fully to that effort an informed intellect, matter-of-fact courage and, above all, patient self-restraint. Not for him the flamboyant denunciation, the taunting of enemies, the bristling of belligerence. Brave warrior he was, but in the White House his work was illumined by a high sense of responsibility, and by his faith that the moderate language of persuasion would be heeded by the people. His mouth did not transgress.

THOMAS H. ELIOT

He Refused to Deny Himself

Robert Farnsworth

I heard the news in a super market. The store was relatively quiet. Piped-in music played softly overhead. Then a voice cut through with a fragmentary message. I only remember hearing the words *President, shot*, and something like *McConnel*. Then the music resumed and I went on about my shopping.

I remember that it occurred to me that the President referred to might be President Kennedy, but I didn't believe it for a minute. I thought that somewhere, probably in Latin America, there had probably been another attempt at a coup. It couldn't be Kennedy, not with the music playing softly, the fruits and the vegetables stacked neatly and attractively. Besides if Kennedy were shot that might mean Johnson would be President, and that was patently ridiculous.

Johnson belongs to the past, to Truman and Rayburn and Roosevelt. He's had a heart attack like Eisenhower, and besides he's from the South. Kennedy is young, healthy, and vigorous. He belongs to the future. He's got the Presidency locked up for the next five or six years.

My mind played with these possibilities while I looked for the canned ham that was on sale. I realize that the possibilities running through my mind were not the least bit reasonable. But my ideas moved in rather free association because it did not seem very possible that the President of the United States could be shot.

But as I finished the grocery shopping I noted that the clerks were passing the word about something. My sense of fear sharpened. As I waited in line at the check-out counter, I watched the store personnel more intently. When my turn at the register came I shrewdly waited to see if the young boy would say anything to me, but he checked my groceries as usual. I was right of course. It was all right. I could ask him. So I did.

When he told me that President Kennedy and Governor Connally had been shot in a motorcade in Dallas, Texas, I can remember feeling betrayed, then a flash of rage, contempt, and pity. How could he know anything about a momentous historical fact like that. Young, pimple-faced, with the soft down of first hair visible on his chin. I snorted. "Good God!" grabbed my bags of groceries and walked furiously to my car.

I got home as quickly as possible and snapped on the radio. The familiar voice of Martin Agronsky instantly made it all real. Appalled I walked up the stairs to the attic where my wife was painting a bed we were readying for our children, and broke the news to her. From that moment our experiences merged with those of millions of other Americans as we sat in numbness waiting for a fact from Dallas, a fact from New York, or a fact from Washington that would help to make the cavernous disruption in the history of our daily lives comprehensible.

If the earth had suddenly jumped five



thousand miles from its ordinary path, the sense of dislocation could not have been more severe. The stark facts of the shots and then of the President's death left gaping holes in one's sense of the density of human continuity.

But gradually as the afternoon wore on, the facts and relationships we call history began to fill the void. There were TV pictures of Kennedy arriving in Dallas; there were reminiscent pictures of important moments in his public career; there were pictures of Lee Harvey Oswald, prime suspect as assassin. But images of John F. Kennedy flooded the memory — smiling, confident, resourceful, almost bruisingly alive — now cut down by a sniper's bullet through his head. Mrs. Connally ribbing him, pointing out with quiet elation that he couldn't complain of his friendly welcome from the people of Dallas. Kennedy slumped and bleeding with his head cradled protectively in Jackie's lap. Kennedy laughing. Kennedy dead.

Lyndon Johnson with his hand on the Bible standing before a weeping federal judge. Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy standing strong at his side in silent tribute to the impersonal power of history which her husband knew so well how to respect without fear.

For me there was a momentary sense of shame at the prejudiced frivolity with which I had dismissed from my mind the man who was now the President of the United States when I had my first intimation of President Kennedy's assassination. It would take some

time to get used to that Texas drawl in the White House. But it was fact now and all relationships had to proceed from there. Johnson was the future. Kennedy the past.

Yet John F. Kennedy will not be consigned to the past so readily. His own refusal to get hung up in abstractions, in remote theories, in rigid positions; his amazing responsiveness to an economic fact, a child's laugh, a political statistic, a family's identity, all cause him to remain with us on easy familiar terms. His life, his vitality, strengthened us, even as it must have strengthened his wife, to accept his death.

One may think of him if one wishes as a hero or a great President. Undoubtedly, many will also remember him as a villain and a dangerous political leader. But John Fitzgerald Kennedy was always a man. He refused to deny himself, and his example was catching. He believed in dialogue — one man talking with another man. He was not patronizing or paternal to the people he led. He met them directly and frequently. He made mistakes, but he was courageous and honest — and he grew. And because his life was so readily available to all of us, his growth helped us all to grow, to become more ourselves, to be more willing to recognize the needs of the here and now.

President John F. Kennedy is dead, but for many of us he will live a long time as a challenge to be aware and responsive, in short, to live authentically.

